

José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission

17-08-2006

Brussels,
BARROSO (2006) A/4064
BARROSO (2006) D/1499

Dear Mr Coburn,

Thank you for your letter of 28 June about the challenge of confronting malaria in the developing world and the European Commission's position regarding the use of DDT.

The European Commission is deeply concerned with the impact of malaria, especially in developing countries, and is committed to addressing the situation effectively.

In April 2005 the European Union adopted a policy framework entitled "A Coherent European Policy Framework for External Action to Confront HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis" aimed at scaling up interventions in developing countries during the period 2007-2011. To achieve this aim, the European Commission proposes a number of instruments to confront malaria in developing countries. These include our national and regional aid programmes which provide programme, sector or budget support; emergency interventions by our humanitarian aid agency, ECHO; research programmes in partnership with developing countries and thematic and NGO co-financing budget lines. Some of these instruments channel part of their funds through the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. You will be aware that 55% of total pledges to the Global Fund up to 2007 come from the European Union.

The European Commission supports our partner developing countries through jointly agreed Country Strategies. In such a framework, the choices and strategies proposed by our partner countries are discussed and supported through programmatic and aligned support respecting ownership and allowing the development of sustainable long term strategies. The European Union is committed to respect the principle of ownership in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and we are convinced that the United States, as a fellow signatory shares this perspective.

Senator Tom COBURN, M.D.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management
Government Information and International Security
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

In the health sector, this approach implies allowing countries to build and fund long term policies and strategies that offer basic health services to their citizens, rather than to promote ad-hoc projects based on volatile funding and with priorities and channels often decided without the government's leadership. This is the reason why we would not and cannot impose any particular strategy for malaria prevention or treatment. Rather we would seek to support a strategy that is fully responsive to the local conditions, both epidemiological and financial, the latter, of course, greatly influenced by international predictable support.

In terms of your request for a specific statement by the European Council and the European Parliament, the EU, together with the US and 149 other countries, has signed the global Stockholm Convention. This agreement explicitly allows the use of DDT for disease control according to World Health Organisation guidelines.

The allegation that the European Commission has threatened partner countries with ~~import~~ bans following the use of DDT for malaria control is entirely unfounded. It is the policy of the European Commission to recognise the responsibility of each government in its choice of appropriate malaria control techniques. All governments using DDT have agreed to do so according to the strict criteria of the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Should food consignments exported to the EU by a partner country using DDT be found to be contaminated with DDT above accepted residue levels, only the affected consignment would be withdrawn from the market. It should be noted that there have been no findings of DDT contamination in food imports of Ugandan origin and consequently no disruption in trade. This mirrors the experience with other African exporters of food and food products to the EU.

To summarise, the European Commission is committed to confronting malaria in the context of poverty reduction and defends the right of all nations to set their priorities and plans for the fight against malaria within the scope of existing international agreements.

I trust these clarifications address your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a long horizontal stroke that curves upwards at the end.

José Manuel BARROSO